(a) the number of post offices functioning in the country at present and the average area and population covered by a post office;

(b) whether any schemes have been formulated by the Government for expansion and modernisation of postal services; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI P. V. RANGYYA NAIDU): (a) There are, as on 1.4.91, a total of 148719 post offices functioning in the country. The all-India average with regard to population served per post office and the average area served by a post office, as on 1.4.91, works out to 4607 and 22.10 Sq. Kms. respectively.

(b) and (c). Yes Sir, postal network has been progressively undergoing both expansion and modernisation under the plan programmes. During the current year as on 13.3.92, 998 post offices have been sanctioned. The following measures are envisaged for modernisation of postal infrastructure so as to improve postal services:-

Introduction of mechanised sorting equipment in selected offices, installation of micro-processor based multi-purpose counter machines use of satellite communication for transmission of money orders; and gradual computerisation of postal savings bank and postal life insurance operations.

Excess Billing of Telephones in Cities

3207. SHRI BHAGWAN SHANKAR RAWAT: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware of the complaints of excess billing in several cities including those having services of advanced electronic system; and

(b) the steps taken or proposed to be taken to check the pilferage of telephone calls scope of excess billing and taping of telephones?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI P. V. RANGAYYA NAIDY): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Steps taken to check the pilferage of telephone calls are phasing out of old telephone exchanges, provision of Dynamic STD control facility to the customers form Electronic Telephone exchange to lock or unlock their STD/ISD facility alongwith supply of STD/ISD details, provision of detailed billing to the customers in non-digital exchange through Automatic Massage Accounting (AMA) equipment, continurs monitoring of exchange equipment including metering circuit and external plant, computerisation of telephone billing and precautions against unauthorised use.

As regards tapping of telephones, the Department of Telecommunications do not tap the telephonic conversation of subscribers, but only provide technical facilities as and when required by the authorised officers.

Production of Gold

3208. SHRI BHAGWAN SHANKAR RAWAT:
SHRIMATI MAHENDRA KUMAR:
SHRIMATI RITA VERMA:

Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) the production of gold during 1991;

(b) the steps taken by the Government during the year to increase the production of gold; and